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NIE 11-8/1-61  
21 September 1961

*NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE*

STRENGTH AND DEPLOYMENT OF SOVIET  
LONG RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE FORCES

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

NOTE: This estimate supplements NIE 11-8-61. This is the  
final version of the estimate and additional text will not be  
circulated.

Central Intelligence Agency

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*Submitted by the*  
**DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE**

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, The Joint Staff, AEC and NSA.*

*Concurred in by the*  
**UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD**

*on 21 September 1961. Concurring were the Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of his jurisdiction.*

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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

21 September 1961

SUBJECT: NIE 11-8/1-61: STRENGTH AND DEPLOYMENT OF SOVIET LONG RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE FORCES

THE PROBLEM

To estimate current Soviet operational strength in ICBM's and other ground-launched ballistic missiles with ranges of 700 n.m. or more, and to estimate the probable trends in strength and deployment over the next few years.

THE ESTIMATE

1. New information, providing a much firmer base for estimates on Soviet long range ballistic missiles, has caused a sharp downward revision in our estimate of present Soviet ICBM strength but strongly supports our estimate of medium range missile strength.

2. We now estimate that the present Soviet ICBM strength is in the range of 10-25 launchers from which missiles can be

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fired against the US, and that this force level will not increase markedly during the months immediately ahead.<sup>1/</sup> We also estimate that the USSR now has about 250-300 operational launchers equipped with 700 and 1,100 n.m. ballistic missiles. The bulk of these MRBM launchers are in western USSR, within range of NATO targets in Europe; others are in southern USSR and in the Soviet Far East. ICBM and MRBM launchers probably have sufficient missiles to provide a reload capability and to fire additional missiles after a period of some hours, assuming that the launching facilities are not damaged by accident or attack.

3. The low present and near-term ICBM force level probably results chiefly from a Soviet decision to deploy only a small force of the cumbersome, first generation ICBMs, and to press the development of a smaller, second generation system. Under emergency conditions the existing force could be supplemented somewhat during the first half of 1962, but Soviet ICBM strength will probably not increase substantially until the new missile is ready for operational use, probably sometime in the latter half of 1962. After this point, we anticipate that the

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<sup>1/</sup> The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, does not concur in this sentence. See his footnote on page 4.

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number of operational launchers will begin to increase significantly. On this basis, we estimate that the force level in mid-1963 will approximate 75-125 operational ICBM launchers.<sup>2/</sup>

4. In addition to 700 and 1,100 n.m. missiles now available, the USSR will probably have a 2,000 n.m. system ready for operational use late this year or early next year. The USSR's combined strength in these missile categories will probably reach 350-450 operational launchers in the 1962-1963 period, and then level off.

5. Soviet professions of greatly enhanced striking power thus derive primarily from a massive capability to attack European and other peripheral targets. Although Soviet propaganda has assiduously cultivated an image of great ICBM strength, the bulk of the USSR's present capability to attack the US is in bombers and submarine-launched missiles rather than in a large ICBM force. While the present ICBM force poses a grave threat to a number of US urban areas, it represents only a limited threat to US-based nuclear striking forces.<sup>2/</sup>

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<sup>2/</sup> The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, does not concur in paragraph 3 and the last sentence of paragraph 5. See his footnote on page 4.

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Position on ICBM force levels of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF:

1. The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that the Soviets had about 50 operational ICBM\* launchers in mid-1961 and that they will have about 100 in mid-1962 and about 250 in mid-1963. In his view, the early availability and high performance record of the first generation ICBM indicates the probability that, by mid-1961, substantial numbers of these missiles had been deployed on operational launchers. Three considerations weigh heavily in this judgment:

a. The continuance of [ ] firings of the first generation ICBM;

b. The feasibility of adapting the Tyura Tam type "C" pad for use with the first generation system;

c. The USSR's current aggressive foreign policy indicates a substantial ICBM capability.

2. In view of the time that has passed since the first generation system became suitable for operational deployment, now over 18 months, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that about 50 operational launchers in mid-1961 is likely, even though the Soviets may have elected to await development of second generation missiles before undertaking large-scale deployment.

3. The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that the force now deployed constitutes a serious threat to US-based nuclear striking forces.

4. As to the future, the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that the Soviets will continue to deploy first generation missiles, as an interim measure until the second generation missiles become available. He believes that the Soviets would prefer this approach to acceptance of an inordinate delay in the growth of their ICBM capabilities. Once the second generation system has become operational, which could be in early 1962, he believes that deployment will be accelerated, with first generation missiles being withdrawn from operational complexes and replaced by the new missiles. It is evident from their test program that the Soviets feel obliged to increase the tempo of their efforts. The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF, believes that this sense of urgency, plus the gains

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realizable from experience will result, in the next year or two, in a launcher deployment program more accelerated than that indicated in the text.